The Descriptive Phonology of Madaglashti

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INTRODUCTION

The Madaglashti language is an Iranian language spoken by around 4000 speakers (Akhunzada, 2018). The Madaglashti speaking community is an ethnolinguistic community living in Chitral, northern Pakistan since the late eighteenth century (Ibid). The community lives in a mountain-locked valley called Madaglasht along the southern boundary of district Chitral Lower.

The forefathers of this community, who were iron-mongers, came from various parts of the Badakhshan province of Afghanistan and got settled in Chitral (Akhunzada, 2018; Lorimer, 1922; Israr, 1969). They were “invited by the then ruler of Chitral to make guns for his army” (Israr, 1969). As per Lorimer’s (1922) estimation, they were thirty families in 1921. However, their population, as of 2018, stands at 3964 individuals (Akhunzada, 2018).

During on-field data collection a novel claim emerged about the origin of the Madaglashti community, which is lacking in the available literature on their origin and history. During interviews from elders and prominent figures of the community regarding their origin and history, it was claimed that their ancestors might have migrated to Chitral form the Badakhsan region of Tajikistan, rather than the Badakhshan of Afghanistan. To support this claim, they furnished arguments of closer affinity of cultural practices as well as greater linguistic intelligibility of Tajiki.

Methodology

The study uses both qualitative and quantitative research designs, thus a mixed-method approach. Since the study is based on field research, therefore linguistic data were collected through audio recordings, interviews, and field notes. The audio-recorded linguistic data are acoustically analyzed through Praat, modern tool of speech analysis. The descriptive conceptual framework employed for the study is the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) theory.

- **Population**

The population of the study are the native speakers of the Madaglashti language. Native speakers include monolinguals, bilinguals, and multilinguals.

- **Sample**

A sample of 10 native speakers were selected as research participants. Primary data were collected from them through audio recording of natural speech, wordlists, interviews, observation, and field notes.

- **Data Collection Tools**

Data collection tools for the study included audio recording device Zoom Recorder, Swadesh word list, stories, interviews and field notes.

- **Tools of Data Analysis**

The collected audio-recorded data were analyzed through Praat, the modern tool for acoustic analysis of speech.

Limitation

The study focuses on describing the phonemes of Madaglashti and their phonetic properties within the framework of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Other aspects of the phonology of the language, like syllable structure and stress pattern etc., which might be as crucial to study as phonemes, remain out of the control of the researcher by virtue of lying beyond the domain of the theoretical framework.

- **Delimitation**

The study is delimited to describing the consonantal and vowel phonemes of Madaglashti and their phonetic propertie. Being a diachronic and purely descriptive study, seeking to describe the phonemes of the language at present time, the study makes no arguments as to why certain phonetic and phonological properties of Madaglashti have changed or get modified over time.

Findings

- It was found out that aspiration is not phonemic in Madaglashti.
- It was observed and verified that Madaglashti language has nine plosives /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /ʈ/, /ɖ/, /k/, .g/ and /q/ with their exact acoustic output and articulatory behaviour shown. There are three nasal phonemes /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/; and eight fricatives /f/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /x/, /ɣ/ and /h/. It has two affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/; and one tap or flap /ɾ/. As for approximants, there are two central approximants /ʊ/ and /j/; and one lateral approximant /l/. The total number of consonantal phonemes in Madaglashti is 26.

- The study also investigated the vowel sounds of Madaglashti, and it was found out that vowel duration/longevity is not phonemic.
- The Madaglashti language makes no distinction between checked steady-state vowels and free steady-state vowels at monophthong level.
- All the monophthongs of Madaglashti were invariably found out to be checked steady-state vowels. Resultantly, the language has two front checked vowels /i/ and /ɛ/; one central checked vowel /ɐ/; and four back checked vowels /u/, /ʊ/, /o/ and /ɔ/.

- There are four diphthongs: three fronting diphthongs /ɛi/, /ɔi/, /ui/; and one backing diphthong /ɐu/. There is no centering diphthong in Madaglashti.

	Bilabial		Labio-dental		Dental		Alveolar		Post-alveolar (Apical)		Post-alveolar (Laminal)		Palatal	Velar		Uvular	Glottal
Plosive	p	b			t	d			ʈ	ɖ				k	g	q	
Nasal		m						n							ŋ		
Fricative			f				s	z			ʃ	ʒ		x	ɣ		h
Affricate											tʃ	dʒ					
Tap or Flap								ɾ									
Approximant		ʋ											j				
Lateral Approximant												l					

Madaglashti Vowels

Monophthongs:

/i/

/ɛ/

/ɐ/

/u/

/ʊ/

/o/

/ɔ/

Thank you!

Diphthongs:

/ɛi/

/ɔi/

/ui/

/ɐu/

Diphthongs:

/ɛi/

/ɔi/

/ui/

/ɐu/